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# DEMENTED

11-20 August

*In the subconscious maze of dementia,  
how do you find your way home?*

Demented is the latest work by acclaimed ACT theatre-maker and published playwright Ruth Pieloor, who, inspired by her deeply personal experience, turns her magic-realism trademark into an oddly comic, yet breath-taking and touching realisation of Dementia.

An exciting collaboration with local artists, Demented intercepts playful clowning, exquisite puppetry, dramatic dialogue, and an original score, to share Rachel's story: the mother, the daughter, the carer, the lover, the artist, and gently take her hand as she unravels new challenges in her family's tapestry of memories.





"A compelling multi-disciplinary drama cleverly embracing humour among imaginative and inventive opportunities for creatives seeking alternatives for exploring difficult contemporary topics."

**Bill Stephens OAM – Australian Arts Review**

### **Dramatic Forms:**

Puppetry (in particular 'Bunraku')  
Clowning (theatre clowning not circus)  
Magic Realism (interweaving metaphor and subtext with dialogue scenes)

### **Themes:**

End of Life  
Life cycle  
Identity  
Isolation  
Memory Loss associated with dementia  
Caring for others  
Family  
Gender roles

### **Styles/Genres of theatre:**

Contemporary Theatre  
Tragic Comedy  
Hybrid / mixed media  
Women's Voices in Theatre  
Plays centred around or impacted by the pandemic  
Magic Realism  
Symbolic/Metaphoric/Visual theatre

**DEMENTED**



## **Potential Questions:**

How effective was the use of comedy?

What is 'Bunraku'?

Comment on the relevance of clowning towards building an empathetic audience?

How effective was the use of breaking the 4th wall?

Who did the puppet character represent?

How would you describe the set design, and how did it support the action?

Was there a cathartic or climactic moment during the play?

Would you describe the play as narrative or linear in time?

Who would you say is the Protagonist and why?

Which character would you identify with the most and why?

Describe your awareness of dementia now? What impact do you think it might have on different people?

Do some of the themes or issues in the play, have relevance to younger people?

What do you think was the overall message the writer is trying to impart?

## **Log Book/written tasks/conversations:**

Describe the use of Dramatic Tension in the play. How was humour used to relieve tension? When did you feel the tension increase the most and how was this done?

Choose an Element of Drama, and comment on its relationship the play (eg Music to emphasise Mood in a scene, Lighting to create a Place and Time, etc). Choose a moment or scene example if possible, and comment on its effectiveness to create Dramatic Meaning.

# **DEMENTED**



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## **Performance Task / Performance assessment suggestions:**

Make a 'bunraku' puppet out of cardboard, paper, cloth, plastic bags, or found objects. Can you base this character on a known story, fairy-tale, known character, or one from the play? In groups Create a performance where 3 people operate the puppet (perhaps a director for an outside eye).

In pairs devise a short every day scene (eg, making a bed, setting the table) whereby one character continually breaks the 4th wall and shares with the audience their feelings and experiences (scene can be mimed or use props).

In groups create a performance without dialogue to music using a doll or large soft toy to present a bunraku performance. Decide who is the 'head' as lead and what roles do other people take, including a director. How can music inform the emotion and energy of this performance?

Create a monologue that a grandparent might say to a loved one about their confusion, and how this makes them feel to be misunderstood. Link this to times you feel misunderstood.

In pairs improvise, then play build a short scene where a character cares for another character whom they love or know well. Give each character a contrasting status (power imbalance). What parallel can you find with dementia to every day situations of care and status?

## **Facts about Dementia**

(source: [dementia.org.au](http://dementia.org.au) Dementia statistics | Dementia Australia):

- Dementia is the second leading cause of death of Australians.
- Dementia is the leading cause of death for women.
- In 2022, there are an estimated 487,500 Australians living with dementia. The number of people with dementia is expected to increase to almost 1.1 million by 2058.
- In 2022, there are an estimated 28,800 people with younger onset dementia, expected to rise to 29,350 people by 2028 and 41,250 people by 2058. This can include people in their 30s, 40s and 50s.
- In 2022, it is estimated that almost 1.6 million people in Australia are involved in the care of someone living with dementia.
- Approximately 70% of people with dementia live in the community.



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**Q THE SEASON**

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\$30 per student

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